

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Interagency Council on Homelessness



Notes from Meeting of the Interagency Council on Homeless (ICH)

Date and Time: April 17, 2012 2:00pm – 3:30pm

Location: Department of Housing and Community Development (DCHD), 1800 MLK Ave, SE

Approximate Attendance:

Welcome and Introductions

Allen Y. Lew, City Administrator, called the meeting to order.

Public Comment Period

- One attendee urged that all stakeholders from federal to local government work together to end homelessness.
- Another attendee stressed the importance of affordable housing for those who need it.
- One man urged that housing is a human right, so he doesn't understand why it isn't being treated as such; He also stated that he doesn't see any evidence that the DC government is doing its job.
- Another meeting attendee pointed out that in 6 years since the ICH's implementation, not enough has been done to conquer homelessness in his opinion; He suggested that this body reevaluate its activities and identify the reason why homelessness continues to increase.
- A female attendee stated that the DC minimum wage should be matched with the cost of housing so people can afford to live in their own apartments.
- Another woman urged better monitoring of the current shelter facilities and implementation of services because some of the homeless people say they would rather live on the street than endure the conditions of the shelters.
- One person commented on the need for greater awareness of the support services that are available to veterans in the City; many of them are not utilizing the services because they don't know about them.

Summary of Pre Meeting Discussion

- Schroeder Stribling gave the summary of the pre-meeting, which focused on two topics: Escrow program and transportation for the homeless population. Fred Swan, Administrator of the Family Services Administration for DHS, presented the Escrow program, which is the practice of having people who are residing in the shelters and temporary settings to set aside a certain portion of their discretionary (uncommitted) income into a savings account. This is not a mandatory program, but there is discussion of allowing service providers to make the escrow program mandatory within their individual programs. The escrow program would serve dual purposes – to help participants accumulate savings that they will need to move into their own homes and to start a practice of savings among participants so they can remain self-sufficient after leaving shelters. Most of the feedback from the community dealt with the issue of fairness, the implementation process and concerns about making the program mandatory.

There were questions about whether this could be mandatory only for those who are above a certain income level. There was also a question about the possibility of a matching program. The second half of the meeting served to get some feedback from the community about the issue of transportation for the homeless. Fred Swan presented the concerns coming from the business community, particularly concerning the stop located near the MLK library. They have inquired about the possibility of changing the stop to another location. The conversation evolved into a discussion on the adequacy and efficiency of the transportation system overall. Vehicle size, equipment, accessibility and other transportation alternatives were among the suggestions that came from the public. Chapman Todd of the Operations and Logistics Committee has agreed to take on both of these issues.

ICH Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Scott McNeilly, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless (WLCH) & David A. Berns, DC Department of Human Services (DHS)

- Next ICH Meeting - June 12th at DC General Family shelter
- A number of the non-government members of the ICH have had to apply to the Office of Boards and Commissions for renewal of their terms. A number of individuals have also applied to join the committee for the first time. Once the list has been finalized, then the City Council will take a vote and appoint the members. The list will not be forwarded to the Mayor until a Ward 8 applicant is identified.

Operations and Logistics Committee – Chapman Todd, Catholic Charities

- The group has met twice since the last ICH meeting – much of the conversation has dealt with the implementation of the winter plan, with a special emphasis on the families.
- A working group has been established to research and identify the number of residents who have died during the hypothermia season. The Department of Mental Health and the Department of Human Services are working with the Chief Medical Examiner to complete this project.
- The annual debriefing on the implementation of the winter plan will be held on April 25th at 10AM, location TBD.
- This committee typically meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month, but the debriefing will take the place of the regularly scheduled meeting.

Shelter Capacity Subcommittee – Michael Ferrell, Coalition for the Homeless

- This winter season was mild, which had a favorable impact on shelter utilization at least through February 2012.
- The men's shelters were operating at 94% of their capacity, and the women's shelters were completely full throughout the season.
- The Shelter capacity committee will hold its next meeting on April 19th at 9:30am at SOME

Strategic Planning Committee – Kelly Sweeney McShane

- At the February Strategic Planning Committee meeting, DHS made a presentation on the TANF redesign.
- The group met again in March to discuss Escrow and what the program would look like.
- Next meeting is April 24th 2:30-4:40pm at the Community Partnership

Youth Subcommittee – Sue Marshall & Steve Baron

- The Youth Subcommittee met with the Deputy Mayor who has encouraged them to continue coordinating their work with the school system in order to focus on keeping youth in school.
- In addition, the group reviewed data from Annual Point in Time Count: 13 unaccompanied minors were residing in a shelter; 127 young adults (18-24 years) were residing in facilities in the city; 334 young adults resided in family shelters- more than 200 of those young adult were heads of household; 37% of the families in the DC General facility were headed by someone who fit into the category of young adult – there is a need for additional support services for the young people residing at DC General during the summer months.
- The school system has also conducted a homeless count - 4% of the student population is reportedly homeless.

Veterans Subcommittee – Mary Cary & Kevin Morton

- The Veterans Subcommittee has met twice as a full body and broke into multiple task forces that focused on housing, education, support services, employment and prevention.
- A new 3-story facility will be developed that will provide job training, financial management training, showering facilities, kitchen area networking, health clinic, etc. This will be a metropolitan location, serving residents in certain counties in VA and MD as well; Official ribbon cutting will be held on May 9, 2012. Location TBA.
- The group will continue to identify gaps in services to homeless vets and will monitor the suicide issue among this population.

PSH Committee – Kimberly Black & John Hall

- The PSH Committee's primary task has been to create a system where the housing-related agencies can coordinate their resources and come up with a consolidated request for proposals. An initial draft of an MOU has been created by the committee, and was sent out to the other agencies to make sure that it contains all the necessary resources that each agency has to offer.
- Director's meeting will be May 8th at 2pm to collect feedback on the MOU.
- PSH production meeting will be on Tuesday May 1st at DHCD.
- A housing expo will be held on Saturday, June 2nd – this will serve as an opportunity to connect DC residents with available resources.

DHS Update – Fred Swan

- The shelters for individuals were not used to their capacity due to the mild hypothermia season.
- 500 new families were placed in shelter this winter season, which is double the amount for past winter seasons.
- Hotels were utilized when there wasn't any space available; last year DHS housed roughly 40 families in hotels; this year it housed 210 families in hotels, despite the addition of 118 beds in the existing shelter facilities.
- Total capacity at DC General is 218 units and it's operating at full capacity.
- Approximately 140 families are still residing in hotels.
- DHS is not placing any additional families at this time.

Responding to the Family Shelter Crisis

Summary of Statistical Family Shelter Data

- 866 families applied for shelter during the FY12 hypothermia season (November 2011 – March 2012).
- 2/3 of the families (575 of 866 families) were determined to be Priority One, meaning there was no safe place for the family to stay.
- 509 of those were placed into a shelter.
- 42% of families who applied for shelter had heads of household between 18 and 24 years of age.
- More than 80% of applicants were TANF recipients.
- 14% reported no income; 13% reported earned income from employment.
- More than 80% of families reported living with other relatives at the time of application.
- 7% reported coming from some form of rental housing.
- Only 2-4% were previous participants in a DHS rapid re-housing program or shelter program.
- 1/3 of the 509 families had previously applied for shelter.
- The average length of stay of families in the shelters exceeded the projections of the winter plan. The winter plan accurately projected the number of applicants for this year.

Current Resources for Families Seeking Shelter

- DHS is utilizing a number of rapid rehousing resources to move families out of the hotels.
- Also looking to utilize other current services to address these problems.

Opportunities to Prevent/Divert Families from Shelter

- DHS is in the process of merging the family homeless system, with the TANF redesign in order to identify families that are in danger of becoming homeless beforehand and linking them to emergency resources.

Housing Grant Opportunity – Brenda Donald

- Child and Family Service Agency (CFSA) is offering a \$1 million grant for housing for families who have to come to the attention of the CFSA – grant period is up to five years. Proposals will be due in July.

Council Committee on Human Services Announcements/Updates – Yulondra Barlow

- A hearing for the Mayor's proposed FY13 budget for the Department of Human Services will be held on April 19th at 11am in room 123.